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Answers to Common Questions About In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)



Senior Fact Sheet

Aging and Long-Term Care Resources

The resources below will help put you in touch with information about state and area agencies, tribal organizations and private organizations serving the elderly in your community.

- **Area Agency on Aging**  
1-800-510-2020  
Information and access to your community’s comprehensive network of community-based long-term care services.
- **HICAP – Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program**  
1-800-434-0222  
Provides assistance on questions related to Medicare, Medicare HMOs, Medicare supplements and long-term care insurance.
- **Medicare Office**  
1-800-633-4227
- **California Department of Aging**  
1-916-322-5290  
1600 K Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814
- **California Commission on Aging**  
1-916-322-5630  
California Senior Legislature  
Triple-A Council of California  
1020 9th Street, Room 260  
Sacramento, CA 95814
- **AARP State Office**  
1-916-446-AARP/2277  
980 9th Street, Suite 700  
Sacramento, CA 95814
- **Senior Legal Hotline**  
www.seniorlegalhotline.org

Other important numbers:

- **Area Agency on Aging**  
San Mateo County (650) 573-2700  
San Francisco County (415) 864-6051
- **Adult Protective Services**  
San Mateo County (800) 675-8437  
San Francisco County (415) 557-5230
- **In-Home Support Services**  
San Mateo County (650) 573-2700  
San Francisco County (415) 981-4477
- **RSVP**  
San Mateo County (650) 696-4195  
San Francisco County (415) 731-3335
- **Websites**  
www.medicare.gov  
www.nih.gov  
www.aging.state.ca.us

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# Answers to Common Questions About In-Home Supportive Services

## Who is Eligible for IHSS?

You must be over 65 years of age, or disabled, or blind. Disabled children are also eligible. A disabled person's impairment must be expected to last a year or more. Those who receive Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) are eligible. In addition, you may be eligible for IHSS if you do not receive SSI/SSP because your income level is too high but you otherwise meet all the eligibility criteria. You may also qualify for IHSS if you are a Medi-Cal recipient who meets SSI/SSP disability criteria.

**Other requirements:** You must be a US citizen, or qualified alien, and a California resident. You must live at home or a residence of your choosing (hospital and care facilities are not considered "own home"). Your personal property may not exceed \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a couple. The following personal property is not considered in determining your resources: the home you own and live in; one automobile; and all life insurance policies with the combined face value of \$1,500 or less. If your income or assets are too high to qualify for SSI/SSP, you still may be eligible for IHSS by paying a share of the costs.

## What's the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program?

IHSS is a publicly funded program. It pays for caregivers to come to the homes of those who need help with the tasks of daily living to remain at home. Caregivers may provide services such as personal care (feeding, bathing, dressing, help with toilet needs); chores (meal preparation, laundry, cleaning, shopping); protective supervision or taking patients to medical appointments.

## How Do I Apply?

Contact your local county department of welfare or human services. If you're unable to apply in person, the department will send a social worker to your home. You'll need to estimate realistically how many hours of care you require a month. A social worker will assess your needs using state guidelines. Be sure to let the person know of any special needs that might require extra time. You'll receive a written response within 30 days of your assessment stating how many hours you're eligible for.

## How Does IHSS Work?

As a recipient of IHSS, you'll be the employer of your caregiver and will pick the person of your choice. A relative may qualify. Talk to your social worker. You may have to advertise for a caregiver (ask your newspaper for a discount). Be sure to carefully interview those you consider and check their references. Some counties contract

with agencies that will refer potential caregivers to you and pay the one you choose. Otherwise, your caregiver will be paid by the state.

## What if My Needs for Help Aren't Completely Met?

You may need more assistance than the maximum number of hours allowed under IHSS. Ask your social worker to refer you to an agency that might help. Friends, relatives and others can volunteer to assist you without affecting your IHSS eligibility.

## What About Meal Allowances?

Instead of receiving help with meal preparation from IHSS, an SSI recipient who cannot use cooking facilities at home may choose to receive a modest allowance for restaurant meals, or receive home-delivered meals. Discuss this with your social worker.

## Can I Appeal a Decision on IHSS Benefits?

Yes. If you request a hearing within 10 days of receiving notice that benefits will be reduced or ended, the benefits will continue at the same level until a decision on the hearing is made. You also may appeal a denial of IHSS, a refusal to allow the full number of hours you think you need or a requirement that you pay a share of costs. For help with an appeal, contact your local legal services office, independent living center or other advocacy groups for seniors or disabled persons.

- **IHSS is the largest publicly funded nonmedical service to help functionally impaired persons of all ages, with limited resources, stay at home.**

- **Depending on which county you live in, you will either hire your own provider or receive services through an agency which contracts with the county.**

- **Spouses and parents of minor children needing IHSS can, under certain circumstances, be paid to provide IHSS, with restrictions.**